

that he knows nothing. It shows, further, that the pilot on whose political sagacity England will have probably to rely at as desperate a crisis as any through which the country has ever passed, is occupied with the interests of theology rather than with the immediate and pressing problems of politics. It is said on good authority that Lord Palmerston used seriously and, with some temper to maintain that Bacon was the author of the plays attributed to Shakspeare. If his Lordship had, while at the head of the Government, or even when in temporary retirement, published essays in support of the paradox by which he was captivated, he would assuredly not have retained the public confidence in his good sense.

Look, lastly, at the whole series of rumors, denials, and explanations which half reveal and half obscure Mr. Gladstone's attitude toward home rule. It were unfair positively to assume his responsibility for the conjectural statement of his views, but he certainly is responsible for his opinions still being a matter of conjecture. All England believes that he is favorable to some form of home rule. If this belief be well founded, then it is hardly possible to use language grave enough to describe the evil done to the whole United Kingdom by the mode in which the leader of the Liberal party has suffered his opinion on a matter of vital importance to be irregularly revealed. If, on the other hand, the general belief be unfounded, why is it that Mr. Gladstone cannot dispel the prevailing error? Lord Hartington has not half his leader's command of language, but Lord Hartington has contrived in a few plain sentences to make his position perfectly clear. This Mr. Gladstone cannot or will not do. It would be impossible not to attribute this failure simply to want of will, were it not for a hazy recollection that years ago, when an impertinent fanatic asked Mr. Gladstone whether he was not a Roman Catholic, Mr. Gladstone could neither leave the question alone nor dispose of it by a plain answer. Nor will Americans have forgotten the difficulty there has been found in defining satisfactorily Mr. Gladstone's attitude toward Southern secession. No doubt all this unconscious mystification (for such it may fairly be believed to be) arises from idiosyncrasies in the great statesman's character which are compatible with the highest talents, and also with indubitable zeal for the welfare of his country. But if American critics will consider how utterly impossible it would have been for Mr. Lincoln or Mr. Seward to have commanded the faith of the North, or, for that matter, of the South either, if he had from any peculiar turn of mind concealed his view of secession under unsatisfactory explanations or inconclusive denials of authoritative rumors that he contemplated granting to the South everything which the Confederates could demand except nominal independence—such a critic will understand why Mr. Gladstone, in spite of his great services to the nation, inspires among hundreds of his own followers every feeling of respect except faith in his judgment. A. V. DICEY.

#### THE "EUMENIDES" AT CAMBRIDGE, ENGLAND.

LONDON, December 17, 1885.

To many that were present at the representation of the "Œdipus" given at Harvard in May, 1881, a doubt must have occurred as to how much of the impressiveness of the play was due to its ample and appropriate setting. Sanders Theatre, if not designed with a view to such uses, at any rate accords in its general plan with what is known of the Greek theatres. The arrangement of the orchestra space and the steps leading from it to the stage needed small altera-

tion, while the great height and breadth of the proscenium arch furnished room for a scene of unusual grandeur, and the spaciousness of the auditorium gave to the spectator that sense of freedom that must have been felt by the Athenians, as they sat on the carved slope of the Acropolis to listen to the verses of Sophocles.

Without any of these advantages, the performance of the "Eumenides" of Æschylus recently given at Cambridge, by members of the University, proved deeply interesting. The little hall used for the occasion, and somewhat humorously named the Theatre Royal, is provided at one end with a stage about eighteen feet square. In front of this and only a yard lower, a space was arranged for the evolutions of the chorus; still further forward toward the audience sat the band. The tragedy was shortened, and divided into a prologue and three acts, for each of which there was a separate scene. The prologue showed a terrace looking off upon a rocky glen, the site of the Delphic Oracle. The Priestess appears, and, after a short invocation, enters to consult the divine voice, but returns immediately and falls to the ground horror-struck at what she has seen. The first act takes place in the interior of the shrine, a heavy Doric temple opening upon the sacred cave. The *Furies* are lying about the stage asleep, while *Orestes* clings for protection to the central altar, behind which stands *Apollo*. The god promises to protect the suppliant. To evade the fury of his pursuers he sends him, under the guidance of *Hermes*, to the temple of Pallas at Athens. The ghost of the murdered *Cltemnestra* enters, and with much effort arouses the sleeping *Furies*, who descend to the orchestra to sing their chorus of rage at the escape of their victim, and are then driven forth by *Apollo*.

In the second act *Orestes* reaches the Temple of Pallas—built in advanced Ionic style—and, invoking the protection of the goddess, falls at the base of her statue. The *Furies* enter one by one, tracking the victim by his footsteps. They discover his asylum, and sing a song of fury and vengeance. At the end of this, *Pallas* appears in answer to *Orestes's* prayer, and, having listened to both sides of his cause, promises to have it tried before a jury of Athenian elders. The *Furies* sing a third chorus, and are driven from the temple by the goddess, who stands at the door, spear in hand, and protects the suppliant with her glittering ægis.

The scene of the third act is the summit of the Areopagus. A herald having sounded the summons at *Pallas's* command, the goddess mounts her lofty seat, and the cause is tried. *Orestes* admits that he slew his mother, the accusing *Furies* urge the enormity of the crime, while *Apollo* testifies that he incited *Orestes* to commit the deed and gave absolution for it. The jury being equally divided, *Pallas* gives her casting vote for acquittal, and finally appeases the anger of the *Furies* by offering them a residence in her city and an honored place in its theogony.

While treated with unflinching earnestness, all the characters, except, perhaps, those of the priestess and the chorus, were played with marked and intentional formalism. The question precisely to what degree the Athenian actors were realistic in the presentation of their parts, will probably long remain open. On the one hand, we have the fact of their stilted shoes, their padded garments, and their rigid masks. On the other, in one of his dialogues Plato makes an actor talk of acting in a way that is hard to reconcile with any theory of merely conventional expression. Whether the young men at Harvard were right or wrong in their attempt to interpret Sophocles with all the help they were able to derive from action and elocution, it is clear that the Cambridge undergraduates adopt-

ed a different course with Æschylus. The speeches were delivered with calm dignity, and illustrated with slow and measured gestures. The result was far from being dull.

In addition to the chorus music and an orchestral prelude to each scene, the action of the play was accompanied by a running musical commentary, and if the spectator now and then found the formalism of the actors inexpressive, the music must have suggested the meaning to him. Although distinctly modern in quality, Mr. Sanford's composition admirably suits the spirit of the play, and, there can be no doubt, contributed much to its success. Especially was this the case with the awakening of the *Furies* and with their discovery of *Orestes* at the statue of Athena. Some scenes, however, received an almost melodramatic note from the excessive emphasis given by the kettle-drum. The members of the chorus sang with spirit and apparent accuracy, and, besides acting out their own part with intelligence, greatly heightened the effect of several scenes on the stage by making inarticulate sounds, reinforced by the band. Although the smallness of the orchestral space and the insufficient difference in level between it, and the stage seriously hampered their movements, they contrived in the choric dances to combine a pleasing rhythm of motion with a large measure of dramatic expression. Their dresses were grotesque without absurdity, and the judicious use of dull foil ornaments lent an effect of weirdness.

The chief characters were, of course, played by young men of marked athletic beauty. The *Apollo* in particular quite reminded one of the antique statues in many of his poses. But decidedly the most interesting figure in the performance was that of *Pallas Athena*, played by a "sweet girl graduate" from Girton College, whose acting in the "Electra," given there some time since, is said to have been of distinguished excellence. The young lady's picture of the clear-eyed goddess was charming in its exalted dignity and simple earnestness, and her soft precision of speech was most grateful to the ear. To one, however, accustomed to the Continental method of pronouncing Greek, or to that in use in our own colleges at home, the English sounding of the letters seemed often harsh, especially in the recurrence of the *ow* (cow) sound for the diphthong alpha upsilon, and of the *z* sound for sigma.

In the matter of the dresses, one felt a lack of intelligent supervision of the draping of the garments, and of sufficient rehearsal in wearing them. To reproduce on a moving model the effect of classic drapery, one must not only know the proper shape of each garment, but must also have a closer acquaintance with the nature of modern stuffs than is usually found within the walls of a college. In a few cases, however, the imitation of archaic stiffness was excellent, as in that of the Athenian herald, who looked like one of Flaxman's figures come to life.

As has been hinted, the scenery was rather unsatisfactory. It would doubtless be hazardous to attempt, with the imperfect material furnished by modern archæology, a reconstruction of the wooden prototypes of the Greek temple; but we need not on that account rest content with the ignorance and crude color sense of a provincial scene painter. The play would have been more impressive had its two temple scenes and the rocks of the Areopagus been painted less harshly.

It is in no carping mood that these few flaws in the representation of the play have been suggested. All who took part in the work showed obvious and conscientious earnestness, and their success was of the highest interest and impressiveness.

L. E. O.

## DAUDET'S 'SAPHO' DRAMATIZED.

PARIS, December 28, 1885.

ALPHONSE DAUDET holds a peculiar place in our modern romantic literature. He does not belong to the old-fashioned, somewhat artificial school, which may be said to be still represented by Octave Feuillet; he does not belong any more to the true naturalist school, which has Zola for its master. He is realistic without being systematically vulgar; he does not absolutely prefer odious, hideous, loathsome subjects and characters; he is not a pessimist, and there is in him an irrepressible touch of the gay, cheerful, and optimistic South. Though he has ridiculed the South in his 'Tartarin' (which might be in many respects compared to the productions of Mark Twain), in 'Numa Roumestan,' and quite recently in 'Tartarin sur les Alpes' (a New Year's book of the season, which has met with much success, partly owing to its charming illustrations), Alphonse Daudet is a child of the South; there is no real sadness, no true melancholy in him. There is a vein of true sentiment, sometimes an outburst of real pathos, in some of his works: in 'Fromont jeune et Risler aîné,' in 'Jack'; but on the whole the balance always falls on the side of humor, gayety, and hope. What is very remarkable and even admirable in all Daudet's productions is what I cannot call otherwise than life. There is an extraordinary vitality and movement through all his work—no system, no elaborate style, no perception of effort; his descriptions are photographs, but they are not dry: "il y a de l'air," as the painters say of a landscape. His characters also have "de l'air": they are all more or less volatile, they have nothing statuesque, they are carried away on the current of life—a current which is sometimes so rapid that you can hardly follow it. In this respect also Daudet belongs truly to the South; he is not a dreamer, he is essentially an actor: "Act, act, in the living present."

There does not seem to be much system in his choice of subjects. He does not pretend, like Zola, to give us a new "Comédie Humaine." His receptive mind takes in to-day one thing, to-morrow another: he is a mirror. You can always recognize some living character in his novels; every Parisian knows who the 'Nabab' was, and can give the real names to all the characters of that novel, as well as to those of 'Numa Roumestan.' The poet of 'Jack' is still living; the verses which are cited by Daudet in the novel were really written by this poet "without a heart." I confess that I do not know whom Daudet had in view when he wrote his last novel, 'Sapho,' for this takes us into a world which is not familiar to me—the world of the studios of painters and sculptors. This world is, in many respects, quite apart. It is very different from the real world, though I hasten to say that the artists of very great eminence are a part of this real world; but the rising artists, the beginners, those who are only known in a small circle, form a sort of society which has a freedom unknown in the regular society. In dress, in manners, in almost all the details of life, this artistic world affects a license and has an originality which make it worthy of study. It is not the "demi-monde," but it has its illegitimate liaisons, which sometimes assume the seriousness of marriages. The women who are met among the painters, the artists, the literary men who live in their company, are not venal, and in this respect they are much superior to the women of the "demi-monde." They are more intellectual, more imaginative; they are living in a higher stage. They are to be seen on varnishing day, with their friends, as anxious as they can be themselves, as curious, as uneasy. There is something of the old "Bohemia" left in this world of painters,

but it is no longer the "Bohème" of Henri Murger, composed only of very young men and women: it is a Bohemia where you meet men with gray beards, and old models who have become semi-respectable matrons.

This curious world is very well painted in 'Sapho.' Daudet shows us a young diplomat lost in it, and falling in love with one of its stars. As usually happens, the innocent youth does not look back on the past, he only thinks of the present; he forms a *liaison* with Sapho, and it is only gradually that he learns that she has been the friend, the mistress, of almost all the men whom he meets; he becomes gradually disenchanted, a retrospective jealousy torments him, but he cannot break the chain. Daudet has painted in his novel very artistically the slavery of these curious connections formed outside of the social rules; his analysis is painful, minute, excellent. It was an unfortunate idea, however, to try to transform the novel into a drama, and, though Daudet has been helped in this attempt by a clever dramatist, M. Belot, "Sapho," as a drama, as it is now played on the French stage, is a failure.

The reasons for it are obvious. The character of the illegitimate marriage, if the word is allowable (there is a very coarse French word for it which I dare not repeat), is very peculiar. Its essential and necessary elements are habit and a certain sort of materialistic love, which also takes the form of habit. In a novel you can show a man struggling against this form of love, and you can show also the woman putting on him the shirt of Nessus, forcing herself on her lover, coming between him and his family, having Time for an ally, and habit and the natural laziness and weakness of a feeble heart. On the stage the element of time disappears; you must show us the human passions at their crisis. All the slow influences which bring a lover under a yoke, which by degrees destroy his sense of pride, of responsibility, which debilitate him and bring him always back, contented or discontented, at the feet of Sapho—all these influences disappear. The quarrels of lovers in Molière are delightful, but they are mere episodes, and they never deceive us: in "Sapho," the hero and the heroine quarrel in a very different manner. First the man takes Sapho; in another act he leaves her; in a third act, he takes her again; in the fourth, he takes her and leaves her again. This perpetual divorcing and marrying is very tiresome and very senseless, especially as, in a few hours, the author cannot explain so many revolutions of mind.

There is, besides, no real drama in the development of the character of Sapho. She has no morality, and it seems perfectly natural to her to leave one man and to follow another: she is unconscious of her own depravity. She wants a home, but it is indifferent to her whether this home is permanent or temporary. She is like a child who should consider any woman as a mother. If she has a preference, it is for the man who is the least worthy of respect; and the morality of the novel is only to be found in this secret preference. Sapho has had many lovers—poets, painters, sculptors; she has always in her heart preferred an unfortunate engraver, who has for her sake committed forgery, and who is in prison. She probably feels her superiority over a man who has made such a sacrifice for her, and when his term comes to an end she is drawn to him by an irresistible attraction. She abandons the young diplomat whom she has separated from his friends, from his family; who has become her slave; who has given up his career for her. She leaves him, and returns, without any apparent reason, to the man whom she despises, but who has been in prison for her.

The painful scenes which mark the develop-

ment of the passion of the young diplomat, the heartlessness of Sapho, the tragical dulness and bitterness of their "faux ménage," are admirable elements for the novel, but they are totally unfit for the stage. The drama, as it is played, can only be endured by virtue of the secondary characters, who are very cleverly drawn, and are always amusing in Daudet's works. But is it not a singular eulogy to say that the secondary parts of the play are much superior to the principal? These secondary parts are essentially Parisian; they belong to a well-defined latitude; such as they are, they are perfect pictures of life.

I cannot much recommend this new system of drawing a drama out of a novel. In a pecuniary point of view there is certainly much to be said for it. There is no doubt that a moderately successful play will win for an author much more money than a very successful book. The railways bring every day to Paris an army of foreigners and of provincials, who fill all the theatres every night. A play with the name of Daudet, of Dumas, of Sardou, of Pailleur, will always make money, even if it is not good; and if it is good it will net its author a small fortune. Such considerations, however, do not concern the critic; and it is an undoubted fact that a bad drama hurts the novel which has furnished its elements. I had read 'Sapho' once with pleasure; after having seen the drama I tried to read it again, and I could not find my former satisfaction. There was something between the author and me; I could no longer give to Sapho, to her lovers, imaginary faces; I saw before me the actors and actresses who had personified their parts. Everything was changed; it was a new world, the vulgar world of a theatre. Nothing was left to my own mind. 'Sapho,' as I read it now, seemed like a new book, and a very inferior book. The finest thoughts are those which have never been expressed. There is also a certain ideality left in a printed book which is lost when the thoughts and the characters come before us in a living form. I would never advise a good novelist to succumb to this terrible temptation of the stage. The dramatist and the novelist ought to be different men; they require different qualities, and almost irreconcilable faculties. The dramatist needs precision, action, almost brutality; his color must be strong, often coarse; he must take us into the midst of passions and show us their culmination. The novelist has Time on his side: he can work like nature itself, he can reveal to us the most hidden springs of passion. He is a thinker, a philosopher. The dramatist is essentially an actor.

## Correspondence.

## THE COMMITTEES.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: A full month, at least a fifth part of the average of Congressional sessions, has passed, and not only is no business done, but the committees who are to prepare the business, not to speak of doing it, have only just been announced. What a medley they form! Square men in round holes, and men that are not square in holes which at least ought to be so. There seems to be no pretence that they are made up with reference to the settlement of vital questions of national interest on broad principles of statesmanship, the object being simply to reconcile the furious jealousy of partisans, though why, for any honest purpose, any human being can want such positions it is difficult to perceive. If the Speaker has great power in this respect, he has to pay dearly for it. Daniel in the lion's den would furnish a fair comparison—that is, supposing the lions to